

Assembly Bill No. 1760

CHAPTER 148

An act to amend Section 1276.4 of the Health and Safety Code, relating to health facilities, and declaring the urgency thereof, to take effect immediately.

[Approved by Governor July 21, 2000. Filed with
Secretary of State July 21, 2000.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 1760, Kuehl. Health facilities: regulations.

Existing law relating to the regulation of health facilities requires the State Department of Health Services, by January 1, 2001, to adopt specified regulations with respect to licensed nurse-to-patient ratios for licensed health facilities, as defined. Existing law authorizes a county hospital in Los Angeles County to be subject to a phase in process with respect to these regulations.

This bill would extend the date for adoption of these regulations by the department to January 1, 2002, and would delete the phase in provisions for the county hospital in the county of the first class.

This bill would declare that it is to take effect immediately as an urgency statute.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 1276.4 of the Health and Safety Code is amended to read:

1276.4. (a) By January 1, 2002, the State Department of Health Services shall adopt regulations that establish minimum, specific, and numerical licensed nurse-to-patient ratios by licensed nurse classification and by hospital unit for all health facilities licensed pursuant to subdivision (a), (b), or (f) of Section 1250. The department shall adopt these regulations in accordance with the department's licensing and certification regulations as stated in Sections 70053.2, 70215, and 70217 of Title 22 of the California Code of Regulations, and the professional and vocational regulations in Section 1443.5 of Title 16 of the California Code of Regulations. The department shall review these regulations five years after adoption and shall report to the Legislature regarding any proposed changes. Flexibility shall be considered by the department for rural general acute care hospitals in response to their special needs. As used in this subdivision, "hospital unit" means a critical care unit, burn unit, labor and delivery room, postanesthesia service area, emergency department, operating room, pediatric unit,

step-down/intermediate care unit, specialty care unit, telemetry unit, general medical care unit, subacute care unit, and transitional inpatient care unit. The regulation addressing the emergency department shall distinguish between regularly scheduled core staff licensed nurses and additional licensed nurses required to care for critical care patients in the emergency department.

(b) These ratios shall constitute the minimum number of registered and licensed nurses that shall be allocated. Additional staff shall be assigned in accordance with a documented patient classification system for determining nursing care requirements, including the severity of the illness, the need for specialized equipment and technology, the complexity of clinical judgment needed to design, implement, and evaluate the patient care plan and the ability for self-care, and the licensure of the personnel required for care.

(c) “Critical care unit” as used in this section means a unit that is established to safeguard and protect patients whose severity of medical conditions requires continuous monitoring, and complex intervention by licensed nurses.

(d) All health facilities licensed under subdivision (a), (b), or (f) of Section 1250 shall adopt written policies and procedures for training and orientation of nursing staff.

(e) No registered nurse shall be assigned to a nursing unit or clinical area unless that nurse has first received orientation in that clinical area sufficient to provide competent care to patients in that area, and has demonstrated current competence in providing care in that area.

(f) The written policies and procedures for orientation of nursing staff shall require that all temporary personnel shall receive orientation and be subject to competency validation consistent with Sections 70016.1 and 70214 of Title 22 of the California Code of Regulations.

(g) Requests for waivers to this section that do not jeopardize the health, safety, and well-being of patients affected and that are needed for increased operational efficiency may be granted by the state department to rural general acute care hospitals meeting the criteria set forth in Section 70059.1 of Title 22 of the California Code of Regulations.

(h) In case of conflict between this section and any provision or regulation defining the scope of nursing practice, the scope of practice provisions shall control.

(i) The regulations adopted by the department shall augment and not replace existing nurse-to-patient ratios that exist in regulation or law for the intensive care units, the neonatal intensive care units, or the operating room.



(j) The regulations adopted by the department shall not replace existing licensed staff-to-patient ratios for hospitals operated by the State Department of Mental Health.

(k) The regulations adopted by the department for health facilities licensed under subdivision (b) of Section 1250 that are not operated by the State Department of Mental Health shall take into account the special needs of the patients served in the psychiatric units.

(l) The department may take into consideration the unique nature of the University of California teaching hospitals as educational institutions when establishing licensed nurse-to-patient ratios. The department shall coordinate with the Board of Registered Nursing to ensure that staffing ratios are consistent with the Board of Registered Nursing approved nursing education requirements. This includes nursing clinical experience incidental to a work-study program rendered in a University of California clinical facility approved by the Board of Registered Nursing provided there will be sufficient direct care registered nurse preceptors available to ensure safe patient care.

SEC. 2. This act is an urgency statute necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety within the meaning of Article IV of the Constitution and shall go into immediate effect. The facts constituting the necessity are:

In order to allow the State Department of Health Services sufficient time to develop regulations that establish licensed nurse-to-patient ratios for licensed health facilities as prescribed by existing law, it is necessary that this act take effect immediately.

